

of the forearms are fulvous to the elbows. Hind limbs similarly bluish grey to the ankles, the grey sharply defined at the hips and quite without the yellowish suffusion which in *S. sciurea* renders the thighs not markedly different from the sides of the body. Under surface and inner side of limbs whitish, clearer, less yellow-suffused, and more sharply defined than in *sciurea*. Tail as usual, its underside whitish.

Dimensions of the type (measured in skin):—

Head and body 350 mm.; tail 41; hind foot 83.

Skull: greatest length 65; basal length 40; zygomatic breadth 42; breadth of brain-case 36; combined length of upper premolars and molars 13.2.

Hab. Humayta, Middle Rio Madeira, about 63° W., 7° 30' S.

Type. Adult male. B.M. no. 8. 5. 9. 6. Original number 36. Collected 17th August, 1906, by W. Hoffmanns. Five specimens, adult and young.

This distinct species is readily recognizable by the marked contrast of its bluish-grey crown, arms, and legs with the yellowish dorsal colour, and especially by the non-extension of the fulvous of the hands above the wrists, this colour extending over the whole of the forearms in *S. sciurea*.

S. boliviensis, found on the extreme upper waters of the same river-system, is like *S. sciurea* in these respects, its special character being its black crown.

5043
 XI.—*The Psammomys of the Alluvial Soil of the Nile Delta.*
 By OLDFIELD THOMAS.

THE dark fertile soil of the Lower Nile and its delta contrasting so markedly with that of the deserts on each side of it, we might expect that certain of the local animals would be modified in colour to suit it. There is little doubt that this is the cause of the dark colour of the Cairo spiny mouse (*Acomys cahirinus*), slaty-grey all over when other members of the genus are more or less reddish or yellowish above and white below, and I now find the same thing occurs in *Psammomys*.

The genus ranges from Algeria and Tunis to Palestine, and contains four or five species distinguished from each other mainly by size and the development of their bullæ. All are of a sandy desert colour, including the Egyptian *Ps. obesus*, of which the type locality is Alexandria, just on

the borders of the western desert. We owe to the late Dr. J. Anderson topotypical examples of this form.

Now Mr. M. J. Nicoll, of the Giza Zoological Gardens, has sent a series of *Psammomys* from Damietta, on the dark alluvial soil, and these, while agreeing in other respects with the Alexandrian species, are so uniformly darker that they should evidently be recognized as a local subspecies, to which I would assign the name

Psammomys obesus nicolli, subsp. n.

Proportions and essential characters as in *Ps. obesus*, but the general colour above, instead of being sandy, fawn, or buffy, quite dark, as dark as Ridgway's "hair-brown," but not matching that or any other colour owing to its dull yellowish suffusion. Dorsal hairs all broadly tipped with black, partly hiding their buffy or drab subterminal bands. The crown of the head is particularly different from that of *obesus*, as the hairs, buffy subterminally in both, are in the new form broadly tipped with black. Below there is a similar darkening of the general colour, the hairs being more or less tipped with blackish. Ears, hands, and feet dull fawn. Tail buffy on sides and below proximally, its upper surface with a blackish line, of which the hairs lengthen terminally, with a well-marked crest and terminal black tuft, the black extending all round the distal third of the tail.

Dimensions of the type (measured in flesh by collector):—

Head and body 178 mm.; tail 149; hind foot 38; ear 14.

Skull: greatest length 46.5; basilar length 38; greatest breadth 26.8.

Hab. Damietta, N. Egypt.

Type. Old male. B.M. no. S.6.21.1. Collected 8 January, 1908, and presented by Mr. M. J. Nicoll. Four specimens.

Mr. Nicoll saw considerable numbers of this animal, all of the same dark colour.

A similar instance of local blackening is given by Merriam* in the case of certain of the mammals found on the black lava-beds of the Little Colorado desert, the contrast in colour between the specimens from the black soil and those of the desert being such that full specific rank is given to an *Onychomys* and a *Perognathus*, while a *Citellus* from the same place is separated as a subspecies.

* N. American Fauna, No. 3, pp. 59-60 (1890).